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# The Triennial Comprehensive Report on Immigration

## Part III

### Education and Social Services Impacts

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# Immigration and the U.S. Educational System

## Abstract

The Department of Education (DOEd) administers a variety of programs that may serve recent immigrants. Most are based on the students' education or financial need. Only the Immigrant Education program provides assistance on the basis of immigration status. In 1995, roughly \$1.6 billion in DOEd funding supported services that benefited students with limited English proficiency, many of whom are immigrants.

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From data furnished by:  
U.S. Bureau of the Census  
Population Division

## Introduction

The impact of immigration on the nation's education system is usually discussed in terms of the growth of school enrollments, the need to provide special services for schoolchildren whose native language is not English, and the need for English language instruction for adults. The 1990 Census provides some information on all these subjects, for both the foreign-born population and the total resident population. That information is summarized here to serve as a background and introduction to the program descriptions and data provided by DOEd throughout this chapter. All population data are presented in rounded form, but the percentages have been calculated from unrounded data.

### School Enrollment

In 1990, foreign-born persons aged 3 and older accounted for 6.4 percent of total enrollment in “regular” schools at all levels, from preprimary through college. At the elementary and high school level, they numbered 2.2 million or 5.1 percent of the total enrollment of 42.6 million. There were 1.9 million foreign-born students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities, or 10.9 percent of the total. However, this number includes a significant number of individuals who were temporarily in the country on student visas. “Regular” schools include private and public schools; they encompass preprimary and elementary schools and schooling that would lead to a high school diploma or a college degree. Census data are not collected on enrollment in specialized programs such as vocational or technical training and English-language instruction that might serve significant numbers of foreign-born adults.

The impact of immigration on school enrollment is greater than that implied by the numbers of foreign-born children and youth because immigrants give birth to children in the United States, who then enter the school system. Direct measurement of this impact is not possible from the 1990 Census because a question on place of birth of parents was not asked. An alternative estimate is possible by comparing the number of (native-born and foreign-born) persons aged 5 to 17 who speak a language other than English at home and are reported not to speak English “very well” with the total enrollment in elementary and high schools. This comparison indicates that the 2.4 million such persons would account for 5.6 percent of elementary and high school enrollment. By assuming that all limited-English speakers aged 5 to 17 are enrolled in school, this calculation is biased in an upward direction. Of course, some immigrants arrive from countries where English is commonly spoken, so their effect on school enrollment is not captured by this estimation method.

### Children and Youth With Limited Proficiency in English

According to the census, 6.3 million persons aged 5 to 17 speak a language other than English at home; fully 74.8 percent, or 4.7 million, of them are native-born citizens. The 6.3 million figure may be the best indicator of the indirect impact of immigration on school enrollments, although not all these young people are necessarily the first generation born to immigrant parents, and it excludes immigrants from homes where English is spoken. The fact that a language other than English is spoken in the home does not mean that all these children need special instruction at school. Most of them are bilingual. Only 37.8 percent of them (2.4 million) are characterized as not speaking English very well. Again, a majority (65.6 percent or 1.6 million) were born in the United States, leaving only 820,000 foreign-born persons aged 5 to 17 who do not speak English very well. This core population is of school age immigrants who may need special services; 87.3 percent of them live in “linguistically isolated” households, defined as households in which no one speaks English very well.



## Adults With Limited Proficiency in English

The 1990 Census reports that 25.5 million people aged 18 and over speak a language other than English at home. More than half of them are foreign-born persons (54.2 percent or 13.8 million people). As with the children, most of them (54.6 percent) are bilingual. Considering only the 11.6 million adults who are reported as not speaking English very well, 8.3 million, or 72.0 percent, are foreign-born. This population of 11.6 million foreign-born and native-born adults might be treated as a measure of the potential need for English language classes for adults, although not all such persons seek formal language training. The Census does not collect data on enrollment in language classes or other training outside the regular academic curriculum, so no direct calculation is possible from this source of the impact of immigration on adult education.

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# U.S. Department of Education

## Impact of Immigrant Students on the U.S. Educational System

For more than 200 years, the United States has been highly successful in welcoming new immigrants and providing them with the opportunity to prosper and make a contribution to the growth of this country. Our greatness, in no small share, is the product of the blood, sweat, tears, and wisdom of these immigrants. Today, the challenge of providing new immigrants with the opportunity they seek is greater than ever before. The basic educational requirements for meaningful employment have increased enormously over the last 50 years. Quality employment now requires a sophistication with the English language and a range of technical competencies that were unnecessary just a few decades ago. This challenge is further heightened by the current rate of immigration. During the decade of the 1980's, immigration reached its highest point since the decade beginning in 1905. The magnitude of this latest wave of immigration has had the greatest impact on the educational systems of the six States where 76 percent of new immigrants reside—California, New York, Texas, Florida, New Jersey, and Illinois.

While most of these immigrants entered the United States legally, a small but significant number were undocumented. Recently Congress debated legislation to permit States to deny education to students who are not legally present in this country. President Clinton strongly opposed this legislation because it would punish innocent children for the actions of their parents. Such a measure is also shortsighted because it would not help solve the illegal immigration problem; instead, it would create a new class of illiterate children in America by pushing them out of the schoolhouse and into the streets.

High rates of immigration create a significant burden, particularly on the Nation's elementary and secondary schools. The cost of providing public education is underwritten by local property tax revenues and, to a lesser extent, by State and Federal funds. Recent immigrants frequently earn low wages and, in the short run, contribute less than established residents to the cost of instructing their children. However, a number of Federal programs assist local school districts in meeting this challenge. For example, the Immigrant Education program provides assistance to local educational agencies with concentrations of recent immigrant students. For FY1996 and again in FY1997, the Administration sought to double the appropriation for this program from \$50 million to \$100 million, a request that the Congress accepted for 1997. Similarly, the Department requested increases in other programs—such as the Title I, Education for the Disadvantaged program—that serve large numbers of disadvantaged students, many of whom are recent immigrants.

The subsequent sections provide more detailed information on programs that DOEd administers, which serve significant numbers of immigrant students.

## Federally Funded Educational Services for Immigrant Students

The vast majority of educational programs administered by DOEd serve students on the basis of educational or financial need. Many of these programs serve significant numbers of recent immigrant students who are not yet proficient in English and are consequently classified as limited English proficient (LEP). At the elementary and secondary level, immigrant students are served under the Title I (Education for the Disadvantaged) Grants to Local Educational Agencies program; the Title I Migrant Education program; and the Bilingual Education program. Many older immigrants are served under the Adult Education program and the Vocational Education Basic State Grants program. At the postsecondary level, federally funded student financial assistance is available to certain noncitizens who intend to become citizens or permanent residents. However, of all the programs administered by the Department, only the Immigrant Education program provides assistance on the basis of immigration status.

### Elementary and Secondary Education

In the case of elementary and secondary education programs, educational need is typically defined in terms of academic achievement. For example, in 1995 Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies served an estimated 6 to 8 million low-achieving students, from prekindergarten through grade 12. These students received supplemental instruction to assist them in achieving to the same high standards as all other children. In 1995, an estimated 1.2 million students who received these services were LEP. While some of these students were born in the United States, many were immigrants.

Another program authorized by the Title I legislation provides grants to State educational agencies for educational services for students who are children of migrant agricultural workers and fishermen. In 1995, an estimated 137,000 of some 610,000 students served were identified as LEP. It is likely that many of these students were immigrants.

The Bilingual Education program is the primary program within the Department designed to address the needs of LEP children. In addition, the Immigrant Education program provides services for LEP students who are recent immigrants.

In 1995, the Bilingual Education program served almost 440,000 students. This program provides instructional services to assist students in learning English and achieving to high standards in the academic curriculum. Based on 1991-92 data from a descriptive study of services provided to LEP students, DOEd estimates that about 60 percent of the students served by this program were born outside the United States.

As previously mentioned, DOEd also administers the Immigrant Education program, which provides grants for supplementary educational services and costs to local educational agencies enrolling substantial numbers of recent immigrants. Immigrant students may be counted for formula allocations under this program only if they have been enrolled in U.S. schools for less than 3 academic years. Participation is limited to districts with at least 500 such students or where immigrant children represent at least 3 percent of the enrollment. Funds are channeled through State educational agencies, which award subgrants to school districts on the basis of the number of immigrant students enrolled. Beginning in FY1996, States could also distribute these funds to local educational agencies through competitive grants. In FY1993, a total of 935 local educational agencies, enrolling more than 798,000 eligible immigrant students, qualified for subgrants under this program. Forty-one percent of these students were enrolled in California schools, while New York schools enrolled 19 percent, and Texas schools enrolled 7 percent. According to State educational agency reports for school year 1993-94, nearly two-thirds of these students were from just 10 countries: Mexico, Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, the former Soviet Union, El Salvador, the Philippines, China, Jamaica, Korea, and Haiti. Table 1 lists the numbers of immigrant students reported by participating States for the period 1992-1996.

Table 2 lists elementary and secondary programs, among others, funded by the Department, that serve large numbers of LEP persons. It also provides data on the estimated number of such persons served and the funds estimated to be used for these services.

## Adult and Vocational Education

The FY1995 appropriation for the Vocational Education State Grants program was almost \$973 million. Basic State Grants assist States and outlying areas in expanding and improving their programs of vocational education and provide equal access in vocational education to “special-needs” populations. The populations assisted by Basic State Grants range from adults who need retraining to adapt to changing technological and labor market conditions, to LEP secondary school students. Grant recipients are required by law to make special efforts to ensure that special-needs students (including LEP students, many of whom are likely to be immigrants) have full access to the complete range of vocational education programs and services.

In FY1995, the budget for the Department’s Adult Education Grants to States program was more than \$252 million, which supported services to approximately 3.9 million persons. Under this program, adult literacy and high school equivalency instruction is provided through public schools, community colleges, community-based organizations, private businesses, churches, libraries, and labor unions. The Department estimates that 33 percent of the participants in federally funded adult education classes are LEP. It is likely that the great majority of these participants are immigrants.

Table 2 lists adult and vocational programs, among others, funded by the Department, that serve large numbers of LEP persons. It also provides data on the number of such persons served and the funds estimated to be used for these services.

Approximately \$1.6 billion in 1995 funds supported services that benefited about 4.2 million LEP students. These figures do not include student financial aid.

## Higher Education

In FY1995, 92 percent of the Department’s appropriation for postsecondary education was for student financial aid. The student financial assistance programs authorized by Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, provide student financial aid to needy students who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents.

During the 1995-1996 academic year, about 4.1 percent (709,000) of all students enrolled in institutions of postsecondary education were eligible noncitizens. During the same period, about 410,000 eligible noncitizens received assistance under the Department’s Title IV student financial assistance programs.

Any student aid applicant who is a permanent resident or has other eligible noncitizen status must provide documentation of that status to receive Title IV student financial aid. Such documentation may be provided automatically through the results of a computer match of information from the financial aid application form and Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) records. If this process fails to confirm the student’s status, the institution of higher education must collect additional documentation from the student to verify the student’s immigration status.

## U.S. Department of Education Programs Serving Limited English Proficient Persons

DOEd operates a variety of programs designed to meet the special instructional needs of LEP children and adults. Approximately \$1.6 billion in 1995 funds supported services that benefited LEP students. These figures do not include student financial aid.

The Bilingual Education program is the primary program within the Department designed to address the needs of LEP children. In addition, the Immigrant Education program provides services for LEP students who are recent immigrants.

Other programs also serve significant numbers of LEP students. This lists the major programs that served LEP students in 1995, estimated numbers of such persons, and the estimated amount of funding used to serve them.

TABLE 1.—Students Counted Under the Immigrant Education Program: FYs1992-1996

|                             | 1992    | 1993    | 1994    | 1995    | 1996    |
|-----------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Arizona                     | 16,001  | 16,985  | 18,150  | 19,463  | 26,312  |
| California                  | 348,142 | 338,480 | 317,174 | 277,232 | 251,307 |
| Colorado                    | 3,594   | 4,114   | 4,370   | 5,062   | 6,631   |
| Connecticut                 | 4,929   | 4,422   | 4,331   | 4,522   | 3,906   |
| District of Columbia        | 6,485   | 4,211   | 4,306   | 4,097   | 3,368   |
| Florida                     | 33,275  | 43,130  | 47,034  | 65,705  | 97,657  |
| Georgia                     | 4,215   | 4,659   | 6,543   | 6,638   | 9,518   |
| Hawaii                      | 3,162   | 3,489   | 3,720   | 3,418   | 3,102   |
| Idaho                       | 1,380   | 2,009   | 2,778   | 3,109   | 3,686   |
| Illinois                    | 39,074  | 42,718  | 45,595  | 59,764  | 61,585  |
| Iowa                        | 786     | 1,244   | 1,212   | 1,410   | 2,430   |
| Kansas                      | 2,195   | 2,180   | 2,254   | 3,542   | 4,653   |
| Louisiana                   | 3,387   | 2,897   | 2,336   | 2,555   | 2,499   |
| Maine                       | 255     | 311     | 297     | 349     | 443     |
| Maryland                    | 13,268  | 13,201  | 11,593  | 11,460  | 8,643   |
| Massachusetts               | 17,074  | 16,342  | 17,294  | 16,606  | 18,717  |
| Michigan                    | 3,618   | 3,984   | 4,677   | 6,121   | 6,379   |
| Minnesota                   | 2,997   | 3,530   | 3,528   | 3,533   | 4,192   |
| Missouri                    | 2,174   | 1,804   | 1,996   | 1,900   | 2,380   |
| Montana                     | 155     | 162     | 237     | 173     | 191     |
| Nebraska                    | 291     | 1,045   | 1,209   | 2,044   | 2,370   |
| Nevada                      | 0       | 2,511   | 5,884   | 3,932   | 4,794   |
| New Jersey                  | 23,592  | 23,850  | 26,618  | 28,679  | 28,344  |
| New Mexico                  | 5,392   | 7,155   | 7,890   | 8,183   | 9,487   |
| New York                    | 139,626 | 158,767 | 146,664 | 147,840 | 149,932 |
| North Carolina <sup>1</sup> | 0       | 0       | 0       | 0       | 286     |
| North Dakota                | 320     | 544     | 327     | 380     | 363     |
| Ohio                        | 1,975   | 1,885   | 2,074   | 2,046   | 1,983   |
| Oklahoma                    | 1,032   | 1,278   | 1,265   | 1,592   | 1,857   |
| Oregon                      | 5,369   | 5,169   | 5,091   | 5,436   | 5,782   |
| Pennsylvania                | 4,255   | 4,463   | 3,799   | 4,631   | 4,605   |
| Puerto Rico                 | 3,528   | 3,500   | 3,292   | 3,515   | 3,625   |
| Rhode Island                | 7,933   | 8,727   | 8,891   | 9,128   | 9,279   |
| Tennessee                   | 1,718   | 1,620   | 1,749   | 2,109   | 2,179   |
| Texas                       | 41,332  | 55,911  | 54,390  | 60,422  | 83,935  |
| Utah                        | 8,148   | 8,909   | 9,278   | 8,653   | 8,580   |

TABLE 1.—Students Counted Under the Immigrant Education Program: FYs1992-1996 (continued)

|                | <b>1992</b>    | <b>1993</b>    | <b>1994</b>    | <b>1995</b>    | <b>1996</b>    |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Vermont        | 161            | 169            | 168            | 34             | 155            |
| Virginia       | 11,898         | 12,404         | 11,413         | 11,408         | 10,990         |
| Washington     | 13,565         | 14,669         | 16,017         | 16,142         | 16,824         |
| Wisconsin      | 1,285          | 1,089          | 1,426          | 2,147          | 2,068          |
| Virgin Islands | 0              | 2,449          | 2,412          | 1,947          | 1,712          |
| Territories    | 922            | 0              | 0              | 5,157          | 7,854          |
|                |                |                |                |                |                |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>778,508</b> | <b>825,986</b> | <b>809,282</b> | <b>822,084</b> | <b>874,603</b> |

<sup>1</sup> North Carolina did not apply for the Immigrant Education Program until FY 1996.

TABLE 2.—Major Programs That Served LEP Students in FY1995

|  | <b>Estimated Number of LEP Students Served</b> | <b>Estimated FY1995 Funds (\$000)</b> |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| <b>I. Programs with the primary purpose of serving LEP students</b>  |  |                                       |
| Bilingual Education  | 441,000  | \$156,700                             |
| The Bilingual Education program is designed to build local capacity to provide appropriate instructional services to LEP students so that these programs will continue once Federal funds are reduced or no longer available. Grants assist school districts to establish, operate, or improve educational programs for LEP students. Awards to institutions of higher education and others support teacher training. The estimates above represent all LEP students served by the Bilingual Education program and are based on data from 1992 grantees. |  |                                       |
| Immigrant Education  | 822,000  | \$50,000                              |
| This program provides formula grants to States for subgrants to school districts that enroll substantial numbers of recent immigrant students. Virtually all these students are LEP persons. The student estimate is the total number of eligible immigrants reported by States in their 1995 applications.  |  |                                       |
| <b>II. Other programs that devote significant resources to serving LEP students</b>  |  |                                       |
| Title I Grants to LEAs   | 1,156,000                                      | \$1,144,000                           |
| This program supports supplementary education services, provided by local school districts to children who are failing, or most at risk of failing, to meet State academic standards. A significant number of children served have limited proficiency in English. The dollar and child estimates are derived from 1993 program data.  |  |                                       |
| Title I Migrant Program  | 137,000  | \$76,000                              |
| This program provides funds to States for compensatory education services to children of migrant agricultural workers and fishermen. Nearly 75 percent of all the program's participants are Hispanic and a significant number lack English proficiency. Estimates of LEP funding and of the number of LEP children served are derived from program data.  |  |                                       |



TABLE 2.—Major Programs That Served LEP Students in FY1995 (continued)

|  | <b>Estimated Number of LEP Students Served</b> | <b>Estimated FY1995 Funds (\$000)</b> |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| Individuals With Disabilities Education Act Grants   | 109,100  | \$46,458                              |
| This program provides funds to States for the education of children with disabilities. Approximately 2 percent of the children served lack proficiency in English; this estimate is based on data provided in the 1990 Elementary and Secondary School Civil Rights Survey and State data for the 1992-93 school year.   |  |                                       |
| Vocational Rehabilitation Migratory Workers Program  | 1,400  | \$650                                 |
| The Migratory Workers program makes comprehensive vocational rehabilitation services available to migrant or seasonal farmworkers with vocational disabilities. Emphasis is given to outreach, specialized bilingual rehabilitation counseling, and coordination of vocational rehabilitation services with services from other sources. Most projects supported under this program serve LEP adults.  |  |                                       |
| Vocational Education Basic State Grants  | 332,250  | \$19,003                              |
| This program assists States to expand and improve their programs of vocational education and provide equal access in vocational education to “special-needs” populations. Estimates of the number of LEP adults served are derived from State data collected by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education.  |  |                                       |
| Adult Education State Programs   | 1,300,000                                      | \$84,500                              |
| This activity provides formula grants to States to assist educationally disadvantaged adults in developing basic literacy skills and achieving certification of high school equivalency. States are required to give special attention to the needs of LEP adults. Estimates of the number of LEP adults served are derived from State data collected by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education. |  |                                       |
| <b>Total All Programs</b>  | <b>4,196,289</b>                               | <b>\$1,570,889</b>                    |

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